LITTLE TO-BO.

By Rossiter Johnson.

No, not Chinese — not Japanese — not Burmese, nor Fiji, nor Crim-Tartar, nor Malagasy. Just plain American. Of course that was not her baptismal name. She came by it in a very odd way. When her attention was first called to the art of rhyming, she was deeply interested in it, and, like everybody else, thought she would like to do it herself. After thinking about it for a while, she said: "Papa, is to-bo a rhyme?" Being answered that it was, and assured that it was a perfect one in every respect, she seemed satisfied that she had now provided herself with every requisite for poetry. Thereafter she would tell a long story, all in plain prose, and suddenly end it by saying, "To-bo!" She thought that this conclusion, by some mysterious reflex influence, cast a glamour of poesy and the music of rhyme over the entire production. Fairy story, wild-beast story, domestic story — no matter what — "To-bo" for an ending turned it all into rhyme.

However, she had a good ear for rhythm, as was manifested very early. She was scarcely three years old when, being pleased — as children are wont to be — with the squeak of her new shoes as she walked on the tiling of the front hall, she expressed her delight to her mother in these words, "My feet made music in the marble hall," which is a rhythmically perfect heroic line.

After she had learned to write, being no longer dependent on a private secretary, her muse became more prolific. Here is a moral reflection that she scrawled on the back of a manuscript. I give it verbatim:

"Lifes everlastin trubbels lead to thoughs that takes hour atenshon to its self."

I suppose when she uttered that note she had about as much of the solid specie of thought behind it as proverbial philosophers usually have.

Here is a complete poem, on the birds in spring:

"Now it is spring!
Do you hear the birds sing,
And see them fly
Up in the sky?

"Now it is spring!
The birds on the wing
From the south take their flight.
Ah, beautiful sight!

"Now it is spring!
To think they should know
Just when they should go,
Live happy and sing!"

Her early poems, like those of some famous writers, include many that have simply a girl's name for title. One of these, which describes a character called Madie, has a refrain, "Ever she." Here is a single stanza:

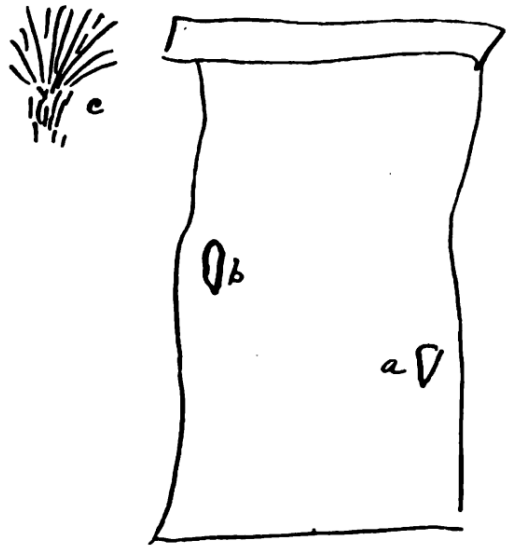
"Madie always thought life lovely,
For she lived in tranquil troubly —
Ever she."

She had a passion for accuracy, and when she could not command the expression for an idea, would quickly make one. Thus she was overheard one day saying to a little playmate who had put a sand-pie into the oven and instantly taken it out again, declaring it was done, "You can't do it so. It could n't bake in just a *now*." And once when she was out riding with her parents, and for the first time saw a beautiful green hedge, she pointed toward it with her chubby finger and inquired, "Papa, in place of a fence, what?"

She spent a summer in the country with a family that had three dogs in which she was very much interested. One day when one of the dogs was amusing itself by turning over and tossing up a box-turtle, she ran around to the kitchen and got a bone. This she threw to the dog, and as soon as he was engaged with that, she snatched up the turtle and ran into the house. She explained that she knew the dog could not injure the turtle, but she should think it would "hurt the turtle's feelings to be tossed around in that way."

Her father used to say to her, as an inducement to good behavior, "If you are a good girl all this month, I will let you be so many years old on your next birthday." This was a very solemn consideration, and always had an immediate effect, till one day she answered, as a light suddenly burst upon her, "Why, Papa, you can't stop me from being four years old in January! You can't make me four years old, *and you can't stop me!*" She used to imagine not only that she must grow older, but that her mother must grow younger, and would say confidentially, "Mamma, when I grow big and you grow little, we 'll do" thus and so.

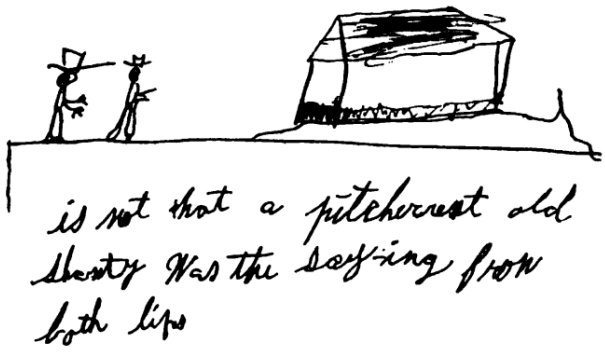
Like all children, she was fond of drawing pictures, and she seldom made one without some sort of story attached to it. Here is one:



THE DOOR WITH TWO KEY-HOLES.

This is her explanation of it (I put on the letters to make it intelligible): "This a door. This, [a] is a pretend keyhole; and this, [b] is the truly keyhole. When the burglars come, they are fooling around the pretend keyhole, and can't get in, and all the while the people inside are lying awake and laughing at them. These [c] are the airs those people put on because they had that kind of door."

Here is a picture that tells its own story:



["IS NOT THAT A PICTURESQUE OLD SHANTY?" WAS THE SAYING FROM BOTH LIPS.]

She had a penchant for definitions, and occasionally made a good one. Being asked what she understood by "politeness," she answered, "I suppose it means to be good and graceful." Afterward, when the family removed to a house that stood at the top of a hill on a great turnpike, where there was much heavy teaming, she said, "I do like to live here; everybody is so polite. Even the horses bow to me as they come up the hill." This idea of politeness appeared to be coupled with a natural sense of hospitality. Once when preparing for Santa Claus, she said, "I should think he must be tired, going so far and climbing up and down so many chimneys. I will set a chair for him by the stockings, so that he can rest." On further reflection, she said he might be hungry also. That day some crackers in the form of letters had been given her, and selecting those that would spell SANTA CLAUS, she placed them where he could see they were intended for him. Great was the delight of little To-bo in the morning on finding that about half of them were missing. Of course Santa Claus had eaten them; the crumbs on the carpet proved it. That Christmas Eve she was asked, "Suppose that Santa Claus should forget to come here, and you should not get any of the things that you have been wishing for, what would you do?" "Why, then," said she, "I 'll just settle down and be happy with what I have." One other instance of her sense of politeness is amusing. Her parents were about to embark for Europe, and her aunt, in closing the last letter they would receive before sailing, asked what she should tell them for To-bo. "Tell them, my love. And tell them, when they bring the Paris dolly I shall thank them very much. And tell them: my dear friends, good-bye!" A year later she was not so complacent about ventures on the water, for she had begun to listen to the reading of newspapers, and was interested in tales of shipwrecks. Going on board a steamer for a short trip, she was anxious to know what were the relative chances of sinking and of being carried in safety, and asked, "Papa, which is the most, the times that we stay up, or the times we go down?" She soon got the better of her fears, however, and on being taken to the engine-room became very much interested in the machinery. Said she, "It is like the roaring of many bears."

She was not always fortunate in her use of large words. One day, discussing names, she said: "I think it is too bad that little children have to have names they don't like, and can't ever get rid of them. If I had a little girl, I 'd just give her some name like Permanent Sarah, till she was old enough to choose her own name." She meant, *Temporary* Sarah.

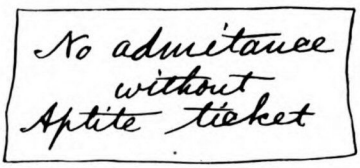
Her first dim conception of the possibility of a pun showed itself one day when she heard the cook ordered to prepare some cocoa for breakfast. "The c-o-o-k will make the c-o-k-o—those are the same word." After the nature of a pun had been explained to her, she used to give out words for punning, as they are given out for spelling. "Papa, make a pun on a hotel"—which word she always pronounced "hootel." "Mamma, make a pun on a thunder-storm," and so on. She was not

wanting, however, in ideas more essentially witty. Once when she sat in the barber's chair, he kept saying, while he was cutting her bang, "Now keep your eyes shut, Miss." "Be sure to keep your eyes shut." After a time, the scissors were at work on the hair at the side, when she remarked with much gravity, "Now, I suppose, I ought to keep my ear shut."

After listening to a famous story, little To-bo took a pen and made a graphic representation of her idea of the hero as he must have appeared in the last year of his exile. Here it is:

One night, after she had been in bed for some time, she sent for her mother. "Mamma," said she, "I wish you would stay with me, because I am so wakerous, and the shadows on the wall are so scaresome."

One Sunday evening, when the cook had gone away, she asked and received permission to try her hand at getting the supper all alone. After a prolonged struggle in the kitchen and dining-room, she appeared in the library, wrote a line, placed something under a box on the table, and went back again. Going to the table, her parents found on the box a scrap of paper inscribed thus, "Warent aptite and take tickets." Under the box were two tickets like this:



Armed with these ingenious cards of admission they presented themselves with promptness at the door of the dining-room, where the tickets were duly demanded. When they were seated at the table, the explanation was given, to this effect: Everything in the kitchen had gone wrong. The toast was burned, and somehow had managed to get cold, besides; the tea did n't taste like tea; and there was a general air of failure over the whole supper. Little To-bo felt like sitting down and crying, and probably would have done so, but suddenly she remembered she had heard it said that a person with an appetite could eat anything. So she devised the plan of having the appetites warranted. Dear little To-bo! when the whole world turns sour and the feast of life threatens to be a dismal failure, you and such as you are the "aptite tickets" that give a zest and a charm beyond the power of any caterer. It is because you are on board that "the times we stay up" are more than "the times we go down."